

Consolidated Plan Advisory Board

April 8, 2022, 2:30 PM

* draft notes *

Participants: Arthur Hamlin, Debbie Ingram, Cindy Reid, Megan Roush, Ron Rupp, Ari Kisler, Rachel Batterson, Ann Kroll, Nathan Cleveland, Angus Chaney, Sarah Phillips, Martin Hahn, Sarah Truckle, Kathleen Berk, Sophia, Grace Vincent,

Welcome and introduction

Arthur Hamlin reviewed the agenda and asked if there were any corrections to the February notes.

There were no edits suggested for the February 14 meeting notes.

Program Updates

DHCD is not proposing any significant changes from the 2021 Annual Action Plan. The VCDP is proposing to change the AM (access modification grants) set aside to \$300,000; and increase the PG (planning grants) target to \$360,000

The priority for agricultural farm worker housing that was added last year will be retained. DHCD is still getting comments on this need, and it was brought up at the public hearing. In the intervening year, VHCBC completed a study of farm worker housing needs and rolled out a farm worker housing improvement program with Champlain Housing Trust.

Also last year the goal for the number of units for homeless was from 5 to 15. At the public hearing we heard testimony in favor of increasing the goal to 25 units. (Maryellen Griffin).

Recovery Housing funding (RHP) was in the plan last year but is not in the draft. (Note: RHP has its own Action Plan going forward and need not be included.)

Discussion and comments on draft plan

Rachel Batterson noted that the 5-year plan includes the Housing Needs Assessment (HNA). One place where the HNA is not fully incorporated into the plan is around fair housing, specifically meaning BIPOC Vermonters. The HNA shows that BIPOC Vermonters are more likely to be homeless and less likely to own their home. BIPOC homeownership in Vermont is below the national average. In addition, Hispanic Vermonters are disproportionately impacted by housing problems, which may reflect farm worker housing.

Rachel would like to see more attention in the homelessness priority to disproportionate housing problems on certain populations; i.e., BIPOC Vermonters. She would also like to see funds include a requirement for applications to include a statement about how the project will Affirmatively Further Fair Housing (AFFH) but noted this may not be relevant to ESG.

Nate Cleveland commented that DHCD is working on updating the Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing (AI) to update the one done in 2017. We'll also have to do a new HNA before next 5 year plan.

In response to Rachel, Nate said that VCDP requires a representative or someone from the town (DRB, ZA) to attend an approved fair housing training every three years and include a certification form that identifies how the town will AFFH in their policies. He would be happy to share our requirements.

Ron Rupp said federal programs also have requirements that are the same as CDBG for training every three years. VHCB's application has a section about fair housing, and they require a tenant selection plan that includes how the applicant will do outreach to BIPOC and other underserved populations.

Martin Hahn agreed with Maryellen's recommendation to increase the goal to 25 percent of new units to house people experiencing homelessness. He would be interested in knowing what our experience was in the last year; i.e., how many units brought online were leased using coordinated entry.

Arthur clarified that there is a 15% goal for housing providers to serve homeless that is different than the goal in the plan to have 15 units of new housing units for the homeless (out of the overall goal of 140 units of new housing.) Angus Chaney agreed with Martin and Maryellen.

Cindy Reid supports the goal of more housing units for the homeless but said that it's critical that rental assistance and money for services be included. (Must be three legs of the stool.) The services are on-site, and rental assistance to bring rent down. Ann Kroll agreed they need wrap around services or people will become homeless again.

Angus Chaney agreed that services are essential, but we shouldn't assume that everyone who is homeless who will qualify for those units needs the services. They provide Rapid Rehousing and one time assistance. Angus added we don't need to set goals that are too cautious.

Sarah Phillips also agreed with the recommendation to increase the number of units for homeless and proposed increasing it to 25 units but added that we also need to consider the work we're already doing around family supportive housing and permanent supportive housing which fits into our long term plan as a state.

Ron Rupp noted that the goal of 15 units is for one year and only counts units with HOME, CDBG, and HTF and that the units we do this year will not be reported for year or two in the CAPER so we don't want to make the goal either too high or low. (Brief discussion by board members of how the goal of 15 units was arrived at and how the lag in reporting numbers to HUD impacts goal setting.)

Rachel suggested using a percentage as way to decide on the number to set as the goal. Based on her years of experience representing this population she knows that not everyone who is homeless needs services or intensive services. There are also services that are available that can be linked to housing and staff may need to be creative and cross trained to deal with people's needs.

Rachel asked if we track whether people housed in these units stay housed.

Angus commented that housing developments use an array of funding sources and if they are counted if they have any CDBG funds the goal of 15 units is way too low. Lincoln Place alone (10 units) counts for two-thirds of the goal. He added that even though they have services, many people they serve are still homeless.

Megan Roush would like to see how many units we achieved the last three years and total number of units. She asked whether units classified as for homeless are "MOU" units (have MOU for services).

Ron thought many of them do but not all. Sarah added that the coordinated entry side is working with Ron and that when a unit is designated for the homeless that comes through the coordinated entry.

Arthur mentioned the plan includes a section on Past Performance and DHCD can circulate for feedback once we have that section done.

Cindy clarified that her comment wasn't intended to mean that only previously homeless need services or that all homeless need services. They are just seeing a higher need for services across the board. They have two Burlington properties with an embedded services pilot. They currently don't have enough money for SASH, housing retention, or mental health services, and need more staff. She is interested in knowing about any funding available.

Megan Roush said VHFA has been seeing housing dollars go to services and would like to see the funds go to the right place.

Sarah Phillips interjected that the conversation is going too long. The OEO has funding for services long term based on our system of caret, but it was not designed to be place-based. That said, she agrees that if a development has place-based services the funding should be built into operating costs. In short, we need both and it does not have to be either or.

Martin said he would like to see the multi-year past performance numbers when those are available.

Nate offered that the New Avenue project has 9 units of housing for the homeless, and Lincoln Place had 10 so we are already at 19 this year. This is out of 37 projects with 317 units new or retained units completed by CDBG in 2021.

Kathleen Berk said it would be good to see the numbers as well because many of the projects are leveraged for project based voucher and may require a commitment to serve homeless families.

Since no one had any additional comments about the public hearing, the meeting adjourned early at 3:30 pm. Arthur closed by noting that that HUD guidance came out saying allocations may not be available until May 13 and we will have 60 days to submit plan once we have those.

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